

The Dissenters in England vindicated from some Reflections in a late Pamphlet, Entitled, Lawful Prejudices, &c.

HAVING applyed my self here particularly to the removing of National Prejudices, I doubt not, but it has been expected, I should speak something to a late Tract, Entitled, *Lawful Prejudices, &c.* And I acknowledge, the Title seems to call me to that Work.

I confess, I have heard much of *Lawful Prejudices* against the Union; but never saw the Attempt made, till this *Out-of-Season Piece*, to say no more of it, shew'd it self in the World.

I forbear Replying to it at large; Not on Account of the Argument, nor of the Performance; In both which, 'tis my Opinion, the Author has acted so much below his Ordinary, that, to me, it is One of the Unaccountablest Things in that Part of Nature, how a Man so capable, and that is so deservedly Admir'd in all other Cases, could form such a Piece of Indigesture, I ask his Pardon, if I am wrong, as this Piece seems to be.

Whether it was, a New Scene he was to Act, which he was unacquainted with, having ever, till now, Acted with Wisdom, Charity and Justice, and when driven by, *Heaven knows, what Influence* out of his Element; like a Traveller out of his Knowledge, he made all his Steps equally irregular, or from what other Confusion of Thoughts it might proceed, I will not determine.

I decline all Advantages this gives me, and very seriously profess, I should entirely have declin'd entering the Lists at all with this Paper, had not the Indecency on the whole Body of Dissenters in *England*, obliged me to Justify and Defend them against what, I confess, I never expected to find them charg'd with, especially by the Person whom common Fame reports to be the Author of this Paper.

In

In my Undertaking this, which I think is a Debt I am bound to pay to Truth and Innocence, I shall endeavour, not only, to keep the Rules of Decency and good Manners, but shall take Care, not to break in upon that Respect, which I always profess'd to the very Reverend Author, both in his Person and Character, and which I shall still retain, notwithstanding this Unhappy Excursion.

This will prevent me saying any thing, which I am not forc't to, in the necessary pursuit of Truth, and the just Vindication of an Injur'd People : But, in that, I hope, he himself will pardon me, the same Plainness which I desire to use with all the World, and which an Honest Impartiality obliges me to.

I shall say little to the Matter of the National Oath, Solemn Covenant, or Sinfulness of the Union here, I had given my Opinion on that Head before, without the least Prospect of this Gentlemans present Attempt, and I see no Reason, from any thing he has advanc'd, to alter a Word in it.

I think still the National Covenant's not at all concern'd here, nor the Bishops in the Parliament at all establish'd by the Union : Uniting with *England, as already Constituted*, is neither Constituting nor Approving their Authority, since a Protest against their Civil Authority clears you of the last, and you have nothing of Concern in the first. But this is not my present Business.

Nor shall I enter upon the Argument he brings against the Church of *England*, tho' I own them maltreated and wrong'd also, particularly in the Matters of the Sacramental Test.

I am no more for Bishops, Sacramental Tests, or any sort of sinful Compliances, than he that is remotest from them : But every Blame should be plac'd where it justly falls.

But I come to that which has extorted this Sheet from me, and against my Inclination, driven me to the Necessity of Debate, with a Gentleman I sincerely value, and whom I acknowledge my self to be no match for. But tho' my Respect for the Author is the utmost Restraint upon me, yet I cannot but be astonished to see a Man of his Integrity, and very Reverend Character fall so hard, and I must say, so *unbandsonably* upon a People, whom once the Church of *Scotland* was not ashamed to call *Brethren*, and who never have deserv'd this Treatment from *Scotland*, much less *Now* ; and this is the Cause of my engaging in the present Dispute.



And

And with all imaginable Respect to my Reverend Antagonist, I must be allow'd to say, here he has not done them Justice; nay, has grossly injur'd, wrong'd, and ill-treated them: Neither, *which is worst of all*, is the Fact he charges them with, True.

It has been but the last Lords day, when in this City a Reverend *English* dissenting Minister preached in the Church of the *Grayfriars*, where I was a Witness, that the Ministry of the Kirk of *Scotland*, esteem'd the *English* Presbyterians as Orthodox, since they committed to him not only the Pulpit for preaching, but the Administration of Ordinances, admitting him to baptize in the same Pulpit he had preach'd in.

Now 'tis very strange to me, what can be meant by saying, *We cannot trust the Presbyterian Dissenters*; How, Gentlemen, can you trust them in Sacreds, and not in Civils; admit them to the Function and Right of the Sacred Office, and not venture them, or join with them in defence of that Office.

If they incline to Episcopacy, will you come so near the brink of Apostacy to *Prelatick Principles* as to receive such into the Ministerial Brotherhood.

Really, if you can unite with them thus, you may unite with them any how, and any where, and to say, you cannot trust them, is very hard, indeed 'tis very hard.

In the next place, can you not trust the *Presbyterian Dissenters*: This is beyond all the rest, since it singles out those Dissenters, who it may be said, *you can only trust*, or those who are nearest in Judgment to the Kirk here: And I must therefore take the liberty to say, it is a Bill of Exclusion against the whole Body of Dissenters in *England* directly.

1st. Because they are the only Dissenters in *England*, you really ought to depend upon, the rest will join with you in Interest, will assist and receive mutual Assistance, and be your Friends; but they will never own your Kirk, nor submit to your Discipline.

2^{ly}, Who of the Dissenters will you owne, if not the Presbyterians; the Independents you may approve in Doctrine, but you cannot joyn with them in Church-Government, nor they with you, the Anabaptists you disowne as Sectaries, and the Quakers as Hereticks, and 'tis the Complaint here, that the Union will open the Door to all those, and let them in to the Kirk of *Scotland*, who then can you trust, if not the Presbyterians. ----- It cannot therefore be any Breach of my Charity, to say it is a publick disowning the whole Body of Dissenters in *England*, as Persons that cannot be trusted.

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In the next place, I would beg this Gentleman, and all the sincere Lovers of the Reform'd Churches in this Island, to Reflect, how Fatal to their General Interest, how Destructive to the Preservation of them, in either their separate or conjunct Concerns, how directly tending to their intire Subversion, and how plain an opening the Door to their Confusion, must any Design of raising Jealousies and Misunderstandings between us be.

What is it, *Gentlemen*, makes the High Church in *England*, and the Prelatists here, against the Union, but the Apprehension of an entire Incorporation of Interests and Affection, Hands and Hearts, between the *Kirk of Scotland* and the Dissenters in *England*? If that Union is not the Effect of the other, both Parties are undone, and 'tis the only way to render the Union Dangerous: To commence a Distrust between us, therefore, is the only Effectual Step to Disappoint the Nations of the Benefit of the Union, continue 'tis all in Jealousies and Confusions, and encourage the Enemies of our Peace, to Crush and Insult us all.

This must needs move any Considering Man, and fill him with Concern, that we should thus be doing that very Work our selves, which all the Powers of Hell, Jacobitism and Dividers, can never do without us.

It is not for me to enter upon the Character of the Dissenters in *England*, or of their vigorous Defence of themselves, both in their Religious Principles, and Civil Libertys, to the Honour of that great Body, both as Christians, and as *English Men*----. They need it not, these things are too well known, even to this Reverend Person himself, and to all *Scotland*, to need any Repetition.

And how either Passion, or want of Charity should so far prevail on this Person at other times so free from the first, and so known for the last, I am perfectly at a loss about.

The first thing he charges on the Presbyterians in *England*, is, That their Divines, of which he names only Mr. Baxter, Mr. How, and Dr. Bates offered to submit to Episcopacy, and on this Submission which was but by a few, and those are all dead, he ventures to say, That all, or most of them declare for a moderate Episcopacy. And then adds upon the whole Body that they cannot be trusted. To clear up this Slander.

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First, I must beg this Gentleman to Examine what this Episcopacy was, and to what reduc't to which they offer'd to submit; and whether he himself is not as much a Bishop as any *English* Prelate would then have been, *Abating the Title of Lord*, which is a Civil, not an Ecclesiastical Dignity.

2. Then I desire him to Examine whether the Bishops themselves did not reject their Proposal for that Reason, that it reduc't them all to Presbyters and parish Priests.

3. Whether some of the greatest Divines in the Church of *England*, have not Insulted the Dissenters on that head, That their pretended Submission was a Plot against Episcopacy it self, that they only acknowledged an abrupt and imperfect Superintendency, and that too with intolerable Limitations.

4. Next, Whether all those very Gentlemen who, he says, did submit, did not at last reject Episcopacy, refuse a Compliance, particularly on account of Re-ordination, and the Oath of Induction, and lose their Livings on that Article.

5. Whether, had they Complied in his Terms, *it reflects on the whole Body*; and how he can Qualifie himself to say, that some people give the Presbyterians in *England* that Character, without acknowledging it was an Injury to them; since nothing can be more unjust, than to Charge a Body of Men for the Errors of a few.

6. Whether the Presbyterians in *England* are not as far from sinfull Compliances, or Leaning towards Episcopacy Now, as the Presbyterians in *Scotland*, of whom 'tis yet a Question, whether an Equality are not Episcopally Inclined? And whether it would not be as just to Charge the whole Kirk with it, as to Charge the whole Body of Presbyterians in *England*, because of the sinful Compliance of a few?

This I cannot but regrave as a hard and Uncharitable Treatment of the Dissenters, who have so Vigorously and with such Success, Opposed the Encroachments of the Church, and stood their Ground to the last.

But this is not all, a worse Charge follows, and in Terms which I am sorry to say, are neither consistent with Charity or Justice; and it grieves me to be forc'd in the just Defence of the Absent and Injured People called Dissenters, to Charge any man, much less this Gentleman with want of Truth. His Charge is,

That

" That *the Dissenters* did so far Countenance and Favour the Dispensing Power, by the Tenor of their Addresses, that instead of silently Receiving the Benefits of the Indulgence, they set up for Advocats to support it, and that to rescue themselves from the Severity of one Law, they gave a Blow to all Laws, &c. pag. 9.

I hope our Author will not attempt to come off of the Charge, by his putting it with a Somesay in the Front, since he either believes it, or would have it believ'd, or else 'tis not to his purpose; and if he does not believe it, he ought to have quoted it as a Slander.

Note here, he does not say some of the Dissenters, But **THE DISSENTERS**, which I think is allowed to be a General, and to signifie the Dissenters as a Body of people, so call'd and distinguished.

If he means only *some of them*, it will do him no Service; for *some* also rejected the Proposal of Addressing, with Contempt.

If he will have *the Majority* Determine it, those that refused it were *Twenty for one*, and so 'tis against him; and *no body* did it.

If he means they did it as **THE DISSENTERS**, or in General, 'tis *false in Fact*, and he will not pretend to it; & yet this Gentleman tells us, **THE Dissenters** did it, and leaves the World to conclude it was the whole Body of Dissenters.

This is very hard and very unkind, and I am sorry I am forc't to Examine so far into it. But to state the Fact fairly will end the whole Dispute.

1. That many of the Dissenters were ignorantly drawn in, to Thank the King for what was the Effect of an illegal Dispensing Power, viz. *Granting a Toleration*; without considering that there lay hid a *Snake in the Grass* against their Laws and Civil Liberties, is acknowledged.

2. That the Artifices of the Court, their Messengers, *Booted Apostles*, Engines, and Contrivances, wheedled some well-meaning ignorant People into the Snare, is also not to be hid, which wicked Crew have been detected, and some of them used as they deserv'd, viz. Contemned by all honest men, and particularly by the very people they Deceiv'd.

3. The Repentance of, and Amends made by the People *so Deceiv'd*, their firm Adherence to Liberty, and their Principles *ever since*, has been Eminent to the Overthrow of all those that formed that Horrid Delusion upon them, and No man should Reproach a Penitent.

4. And

4. And *when all is done*, these were but a few, and so few as bear no Proportion *worth notice*, to the Number of the Honest Dissenters, that to the last Opposed those Illegal Proceedings —, and to lay it was THE DISSENTERS, a Term General, and Embracing the the whole as a Body, is most Unsufferably Injurious.

5. As to the General, *Viz.* Addressing or thanking the King for his Indulgence; Our Author is also mistaken, in his Charging the Dissenters, unless he make it appear that any of those Addressees, Recogniz'd the King's Right of Dispensing with the Laws.

The Liberty of Conscience they thank't him for, 'tis true was their Native Right, and their Right as Christians; it had been withheld from them by an Unjust and Illegal Persecution —. Now tho a man Restores me my Right, which another Invaded, I may thank him for the Fact, tho it was a Debt to Justice, without joining in his reserved Design, because I am obliged in Civility, to him that Delivers me from Oppression, tho it be his Duty to do it. Else all Our Addressees to King *William*, or Her present Majesty may be Censured also —, to say the King did it with an Evil Design is not to the purpose, unless those that gave the Thanks knew that Design, which Thousands at that time were not Convinc't of, and as soon as they were Convinc't, abhorred the Design, and publickly Opposed it.

So far then as any of the Dissenters in their Addressees Own'd the Invasion of the *English* Laws, and the King's Dispensing Power, so far they are to be Charg'd; but if this Gentleman was to Examine how many he can Charge with that, he would be far from laying it upon the whole Body for so Scandalous a Few.

I might refer him home also, and Enquire whether there was no Addressing here at the same time, and whether some even of the Ministers in *Scotland*, I care not to Collect Names, did not Address on the same Head, and thank the King for the very same thing —. And 'twould be very hard if I should from thence Charge the Kirk of *Scotland* with Countenancing the Dispensing Power of King *James*, but the Justice would be the same, if I should.

Upon these Accounts, I think the Dissenters in *England* ill-treated, and I am, I confess not a little Surpriz'd that these things being of such recent Memory, should slip the Thoughts of any Man; for certainly, if such Addressees were made here by Ministers themselves, it

it should have been the last thing any Minister here should have done to reproach the Dissenters in *England* with, and I make no Doubt this Gentleman will, when he reflects on this, do so much Justice as to acknowledge his Error.

I shall Enter into none of the Arguments brought together, *How-
ever abruptly* against the Union. The Thing is Over, and the Debate useless, and I hope the Effects will soon Convince the Nation of the Benefit: My Design is not an Answer to the Book, but a Vindication of the Dissenters in *England*, from some of the worst Treatment I ever remember them to have met with, from One of their own Brethren in my Time, and I think with the least Provocation.

I Humbly and Sincerely Recommend it to him, to Reflect on the Unkindness and Injustice of it, and to make such amends to the Good Name of his Brethren, as his own Respect to Justice, shall persuade him, is their Due.

E I N S.